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ABSTRACT

This book examines the rhetoric surrounding the notion of informal learning in order to expand debate about the uses of informal learning in workplaces and about attempts to "recognize" it through competency-based standards. The following topics are among those discussed in the book's eight chapters: (1) the nature of informal learning in the workplace (the discourses shaping informal learning, differences between informal and incidental learning); (2) theorizing informal learning (theories of informal learning, why informal learning has become so important, the politics of learning from experience, postmodernism and informal learning); (3) work as a learning environment and the language of human resource development (HRD) (conditions of learning at work, learning organizations, competitiveness, aligning educational goals with industry needs); (4) the hidden curriculum of learning at work (strategies of postindustrial workplaces); (5) professional identity and self-regulation at work (corporate language about worker empowerment, self-directed learning, and identity); (6) the performativity principle in informal learning (new links between industry and education); (7) rhetorizing informal workplace learning (informal learning and the training of "economic subjects"); and (8) doubts about postmodern doubt (possible future of HRD practices). Appended are the following: overview of research methods; glossary; and 327-item bibliography. (MN)